

The Video Relay Service currently being offered to deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late deafened individuals throughout the country is the first time most of these people have had true "equal access" to the telephone system. As you may be aware, American Sign Language does not follow the same grammatical structure as English thus many deaf people have been raised embarrassed of their use of English and struggle with using the TDD.

My deaf father passed away 1 1/2 years ago. The TTY/TDD used for telephone communication for the deaf since the 70's was NEVER ACCESSIBLE to my father due to his "struggle" with English. Even in his 80's, my father was never comfortable with the telephone enough to even call "911". My mother, who is also deaf and still living, finds the video relay service a "breath of fresh air" with it's ease of use. She, for the first time in her life, is able to communicate DIRECTLY with her friends as well as take care of business "in the COMFORT of her own living room" in her primary language.

This video relay service is finally giving the deaf a comfortable means of communication where they can not only take care of business over the phone as hearing people do, but also can comfortably carry on conversations with family and friends.

PLEASE continue to allocate adequate funding to maintain video relay services at their current status if not improvement in services. This service is vital for the deaf communtiy.

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